as is normally done for a passport and visa. This travel is open to all Indian and Pakistani nationals.

The Srinagar-Muzaffarabad link would significantly enhance people-to-people contact across the LoC. The LoC is not a recognized international boundary and the system followed does not compromise our position on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. Travel on the bus would be allowed only after due procedure and checks to prevent misuse.

Conditions imposed by Pakistan for new CBMs

1742. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan has taken a position that no new Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) will be taken unless the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service is started without passports and visa; and

(b) if so, Government's response in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Shortage of Staff in Visa Division

1743. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Visa Division employees were working even on holidays despite facing severe staff shortage with the workload increasing to manifold;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken/to be taken by the Government to ease the workload of the employees?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) Due to non-cooperative approach of some of the officials in the passport Offices, the pendency had increased, resulting in delays in issue of passports. Nearly, 45000

passports were pending in Passport Office, Delhi alone causing undue hardship to the public. It was then decided to requisition Government employees in public interest to work after office hours and on holidays to clear the backlog.

(c) Statistics show that the demand for passport services is constantly on the rise. This is being addressed in several ways including by way of decentralisation, rationalisation of work process, increasing efficiency of Government officials and computerisation.

Bl-Lingual entries in Passports

†1744. SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the entries in the passports being issued in the country are being made in Hindi or Bi-lingually; and

(b) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Passport entries cannot be made in Hindi alone as it is presented to foreign authorities on entry and exit. Presently, passport entries are being made in English alone.

(b) The matter has been examined in details and for the time being, it has not been found possible for technical reasons to make bi-lingual entries in the passports.

Suchetgarh-Siyalkot Bus Sevice

1745. SHRI T. S. BAJWA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to answer to Starred Question 41 given in Rajya Sabha on 3rd March, 2005 and state:

(a) if so, whether Government would consider opening of Suchetgarh (in R.S. Pura)-Siyalkot bus service involving 11 kms. from border to meet the long pressing demand of people on both sides;

(b) if so, by when this bus service is likely to be opened; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

---

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.